

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2773

UNCLAS KATHMANDU 3910

FOR LORTON, NEA/INS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CGEN

SUBJECT: AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION

1. AT REQUEST OF STEPHEN E. JOHNSON, LEADER OF THE AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION, EMBOFF OBTAINED CONFIRMATION FORMAL PERMISSION EXPEDITION TO CLIMB ANNAPURNA I IN SPRING 1976. TEXT OF FOREIGN OFFICE LETTER SENT BY EMBOFF READ IN PERSONNAL-LETTER TO JOHNSON READS AS FOLLOWS:

QUOTE THIS WILL REFER TO YOUR MOUNTAINEERING APPLICATION DATED AUGUST 5, 1974 FOR UNDERTAKING AN EXPEDITION TO ANNAPURNA I IN THE PRE-MONSOON SEASON OF 1976. I AM PLEASED TO INFORM YOU THAT HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL HAS DECIDED TO GRANT YOU PERMISSION FOR THE EXPEDITION UNDER REFERENCE. BUT YOUR REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN FROM THE NORTH-WESTERN SIDE CANNOT BE COMPLIED WITH AS THE WHOLE OF THE KALI GANDAKI VALLEY IS AT PRESENT CLOSED TO FOREIGN TOURISTS. IN CASE THE KALI GANDAKI AREA IS NOT OPEN BY THE SPRING OF 1976 YOU SHALL BE ALLOWED TO CLIMB ANNAPURNA ONLY FROM THE SOUTHERN SIDE.

(SIGNED) MADHAB P. KHANAL
SECTION OFFICER UNQUOTE

2. IN VIEW EXPEDITION'S COMMITMENT TO CLIMB ANNAPURNA FROM NORTH AND NEED FOR CONFIRMATION OF ACCESS TO MOUNTAIN VIA KALI GANDAKI PRIOR TO SHIPPING EQUIPMENT, AMBASSADOR MET WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY KHATRI ON SEPTEMBER 2 AND SUPPORTED EXPEDITION'S
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REQUEST THAT IT BE ALLOWED TO TRAVEL IN AREA, STRESSING NEED

FOR URGENT DECISION. KHATRI EXPLAINED THAT HE ALREADY HAD DISCUSSED OPENING OF KALI GANDAKI WITH HOME SECRETARY BUT, BECAUSE OF SECURITY PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH KHAMPA RESETTLEMENT, HOME MINISTRY WAS AGAINST OPENING AREA AT THIS TIME. AMBASSADOR, HOWEVER, PRESSED POINT OF ALLOWING EXPEDITION INTO AREA AS EXCEPTION TO EXISTING REGULATIONS, IF REOPENING REGION TO TOURISM IN GENERAL NOT NOW FEASIBLE. HE RECALLED TO KHATRI THAT NEPALESE LIAISON OFFICER WOULD ACCOMPANY EXPEDITION. KHATRI AGREED TO DISCUSS ISSUE WITH APPROPRIATE HMG AUTHORITIES AND ADVISE EMBASSY OF DECISION WITHIN NEXT SEVERAL DAYS. EMBASSY WILL FOLLOW UP.

3. PLEASE COMMUNICATE THE ABOVE BY TELEPHONE TO: MR. STEPHEN JOHNSON, 377 COUNTRYVIEW DRIVE, MILL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA (TEL. 415-383-3367) AND MR. FRANK DE LA VEGA, SECRETARY, AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB, 113 E. 90TH STREET, NEW YORK (TEL. 212-722-1628). PLEASE INFORM JOHNSON AND DE LA VEGA EMBASSY WILL ADVISE THEM THROUGH DEPARTMENT AS SOON AS HMG REACHES DECISION. CARGO

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